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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

I.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A RUSSIAN SOLDIER.

ALEXANDER VERESTCHAGIN is not widely known to fame, but he is entitled to thanks for the very interesting, though rather lengthy and sometimes tedious, story of his life and adventures as a well-born Russian and soldier.* The first part of this book is taken up with an account of the author's childhood and youth; the second with his adventures as an *aide* to the impetuous Skobeloff in the late Danubian war; the third part furnishes us with some particulars of the Tekke expedition formed for the reduction of a trans-Caspian tribe of Turcomans who had proved themselves valiant and troublesome foes of Russia in her dispute with Turkey about the provinces. The reader will derive a great deal of information from these pages about Russian people and Russian ways of fighting. The author does not pose as a celebrity, on the contrary, he sometimes rather needlessly belittles himself, and writes very modestly of his personal achievements. By reading such books as this one gets a better idea of a foreign country and people than many persons could do by months of travel; hence there is a value to a truthfully descriptive and ingenious work of this order far exceeding the intrinsic worth of the facts recorded.

II.

MISCELLANEOUS.

HOWARD SEELY—whether a genuine name or *nom de plume* we know not—writes a pleasant story,† in which some features of Western frontier life are vividly sketched. The author is evidently a keen and close observer. This fact, indeed, gives the greatest value and interest to the book, for the plot and plan of the story are both weak and commonplace. A gentleman ranchman somewhere out on the Colorado River, falls in by accident with a pretty and pert maiden, the untutored and unsophisticated daughter of an old settler. The girl speaks frontier language, and is charmingly ignorant of conventionalities, but is a girl of pluck and daring, and her attractions are sufficient in our hero's eyes to make him break off an incipient courtship with a fascinating young lady of his own social class. The author's literary tact and skill are shown in the purely descriptive passages, such as the turkey hunt on the Texas prairie, and the murder trial before Judge Pemberton and a jury of the town of Oskalo, which are faithful and character-

* "At Home and in War. 1853-1881." Reminiscences and Anecdotes. By Alexander Verestchagin. Translated by Isabel Hapgood. T. Y. Crowell & Co.

† "A Nymph of the West." A novel. By Howard Seely. D. Appleton & Co.

istic sketches. We would suggest greater study of the plan and general features of novel writing, and an assiduous cultivation of descriptive writing from a close study of humanity and nature.

Mr. Richard Dowling, in his collection of papers styled "*Ignorant Essays*,"* does not impress us as being possessed of any remarkable powers of observation, or as being entitled to special attention for his novel or piquant criticisms. As a man of general culture and literary experience, his particular opinions and views are sure to be of some interest, and as sure to be well expressed; and there is also abundant range, in the free and off-hand irony, for the play of fancy and the exercise of memory and of the critical faculty. The author has availed himself of this freedom to skip from topic to topic in the most approved style of light and airy gossip; but the result is neither very entertaining nor specially striking, and after reading two or three essays we find it difficult to proceed. The fact is that this style of essay writing, with its continuous use of the first personal pronoun, demands a great deal of brain and brilliancy, or it soon becomes wearisome; and in these essays the constant use of the pronoun I is really the most noticeable feature, and, in the absence of other important qualities, condemns the book. In his essay on Allegory the author kills the "*Pilgrim's Progress*" in this style: "I am writing in an off-hand way, and I will not pause to examine the question nicely; but is there any such thing as a successful allegory? I have no experience of one. I seem to hear a loud shout of '*The Pilgrim's Progress*.' Well, I never could read the book through, and I have tried at least twenty times. I have put the reading of that book before myself in the most solemn manner. I have told myself over and over again that I ought to read it as an educational exercise. In vain. How any man with imagination can bear the book I do not know." This kind of essay writing reminds us of a young ranchman, who, after a prolonged struggle with a colt who was an unwilling subject of the lariat rope, described his sensations as suggesting a contest with a demon with a thousand eyes and a thousand limbs in perpetual motion.

Mr. Adee's fanciful romance† does credit to his inventive talents, and proves his ability to make the most of matter of fact materials. The story is dated at a period so recent as to make it appear almost a piece of contemporary history. It deals with a certain mystery connected with a New York family,—fictitious, of course,—victims of a belief in Voodooism, and it minutely describes the methods taken to unravel the mystery and expose the criminalities believed to be interwoven therewith. Many persons are said to have been inveigled into this house on some pretext or other and to have thenceforward disappeared from view. In following up certain clues, discoveries are made which throw light upon the hidden and horrible rite of snake worship, and at the same time reveal the tricks and rascalities of a couple of fascinating women. A love story is delicately interwoven with these matters. Despite a little prolixity in the details, the book has a certain fascination for the lovers of the marvelous, and has a quiet vein of humor about it which makes it wholesome vacation reading.

The life of Constans L. Goodell‡ is the record of an earnest, broad minded, God-fearing man, whose years were spent in successful Christian work, first as

* "*Ignorant Essays*." By Richard Dowling. D. Appleton & Co.

† "*No. 19 State Street*." By David Graham Adee. Cassell & Co.

‡ "*The Life of Constans L. Goodell, D.D.*" By A. H. Currier, D.D. New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Co.

pastor of the South Church in New Britain, Conn., and later, till the close of his life, in the Pilgrim Church of St. Louis. In the hands of Dr. Currier, of Oberlin, this record of a noble life is presented in a most acceptable manner. The style is simple, direct, and unassuming. There is little that is purely eulogistic. The facts are clearly stated, and the reader is allowed to draw his own conclusions. It is safe to say that all who love righteousness, and honor Christian faithfulness, as well as those who enjoy well-written biography, will accord a welcome to this excellent book. Numerous graphic and entertaining letters, written during the five journeys which Dr. Goodell made abroad, diversify the pages, and show us a genial, home-loving man.

The hero of Mohammed Benani* is a Russian gentleman of fortune who expatriates himself, and, with his wife, who is rather the abler person of the two, seeks a home in Northern Africa, because he is depressed by the sight of so much wretchedness in his own country which he is unable to relieve. His overflowing benevolence, however, soon finds a broad field of labor in the cause of the oppressed natives in the land of his adoption. The main issues of the story are sometimes obscured by tedious by-play, but the episodes of Eftomah and Casimir; the unhappy duel whose final catastrophe has no satisfactory explanation, and the night attack on Medoura, have sufficient dramatic interest to carry the reader through considerable less entertaining matter. The opening scenes occur at Mauritania, but the arrest of Paulovitch transfers us temporarily to Russia, and there is a characteristic encounter with Russian officials, including the "white Czar" himself. No author's name appears on the title-page, but the book is understood to be the work of Mr. Ion Perdicaris (the son of a Greek refugee of 1830, a former professor at Yale College), who is now residing in London, though the preface is dated from Tangiers.

Dr. Barrows' disquisition on the Indian question† is a re-presentation of a theme not new, but not too frequently discussed so long as the important problem remains unsolved. The same task has been more satisfactorily accomplished by others, but many who have not the leisure for a more extended work will welcome this, which is brought within such limits as to attract the attention of busy people. Dr. Barrows evidently does not consider the main question: What shall be done with the Indian, but, How shall we secure honest white men to administer the good laws enacted at Washington, and How restrain the iniquitous examples of the corrupt inhabitants of the border. Incoherency of statement and inexact language mar certain portions of the book, but it is calculated to throw light on a dark page of our history, and it will undoubtedly be successful.

No daintier volume of verse has lately been produced than the collection‡ of ballads, rondeaus, chants royal, triolets and other quaint and musical forms of poetry, imitated from the time of the Troubadours by modern authors, and brought together in a happy arrangement by Mr. Gleeson White. It is an excellent selection for the summer lounge in the hammock or on the beach. Each poem is brief; no style is so continuous as to become monotonous; and airy, graceful fancies trickle lightly through the harmonious measures. A well-written and

* "The Case of Mohammed Benani." A story of to-day. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

† "The Indian's side of the Indian Question." By William Barrows, D.D. Boston: D. Lothrop Company.

‡ "Ballads and Rondeaus, Chants Royal, Sestinas, Villanelles, etc." Selected, with chapter on the Various Forms, by Gleeson White. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

valuable sketch of the early French lyric poetry, and the rules governing their construction precedes the verses, which, it may be said, are taken from a great variety of sources, from English, French, and American authors, and are fittingly clothed in a dress of Gobelin blue and gold. Here is a specimen verse from "The Pipes of Pan":

" In these prosaic days
Of politics and trade,
Where seldom fancy lays
Her touch on man or maid,
The sounds are fled that strayed
Along sweet strains that ran;
Of song the world's afraid;
Where are the Pipes of Pan ?

Several interesting incidents of Revolutionary times are woven together to form a small volume * in the " Classics for Home and School " series. The work is not a classic from whatever standpoint it is considered. Numerous rhetorical errors are found ; the style is often involved and ambiguous, and the vocabulary extremely commonplace. If the children for whom it is written are too young to discover these blemishes, they will find the thrilling stories of life in war time very entertaining.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

D. Appleton & Co.

Ninette. An Idyll of Provence. By the author of "Vera."
A Virginia Inheritance. A novel by Edmund Pendleton.

G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Tariff History of the United States. F. W. Taussig.
Industrial Liberty. John M. Bonham.
The Independent in Politics. James Russell Lowell.

Lee & Shepard.

The Boston Tea Party and other stories. Henry C. Watson.
Mexico. Picturesque, Political, Progressive. Mary Elizabeth Blake and Margaret F. Sullivan.

L. K. Strouse.

The Civil Service Law. William Harrison Clark.

Bloch & Co.

The Rabbiical Dialectics. Aaron Hahn.

Webster & Co.

A Library of American Literature. Compiled and edited by Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Mackay Hutchinson. In ten volumes. Vols. I. to IV.

* "Noble Deeds of Our Fathers. As Told by Soldiers of the Revolution Gathered Around the Old Bell of Independence." Revised and adapted from Henry C. Watson. Boston : Lee & Shepard.